



# **The Stand**

*Stephen King*

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This is the way the world ends: with a nanosecond of computer error in a Defense Department laboratory and a million casual contacts that form the links in a chain letter of death.

And here is the bleak new world of the day after: a world stripped of its institutions and emptied of 99 percent of its people. A world in which a handful of panicky survivors choose sides or are chosen. A world in which good rides on the frail shoulders of the 108-year-old Mother Abigail and the worst nightmares of evil are embodied in a man with a lethal smile and unspeakable powers: Randall Flagg, the Dark Man.

## **The Stand Details**

### **The Stand**

1348 pages , Published June 24th 2008 by Anchor (first published October 3rd 1978)

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## Justin Tate says

As soon as Chinese New Year got cancelled, I knew coronavirus was serious. Then the virus spread just like viruses do in every horror novel. So much so, in fact, that my immediate first thought was not to stock up on bottled water and toilet paper, but that it's finally time to read *The Stand*.

Naturally I'm a Stephen King superfan, so it's strange I hadn't yet read what is commonly considered his magnum opus. In the back of my mind I knew there would be a right time to read it. I thought it might be after King's death (rue the day) or after reading everything else by him. As a way to fully compare it to the rest of his oeuvre. Clearly, however, a once-in-a-100-years pandemic was the sign I was looking for. This is it, folks. It's time.

As it turned out...maybe not the best idea. After seven months of living through this, there's a level of new normalcy. But in those early days, during constant uncertainty, seeing nearly 4,000 Americans die daily, entire nursing homes wiped out, entire families...it was scary as hell. Reading a scary book during a scary time isn't nearly as fun as it sounds.

I kept a reading journal throughout this time. Partly because I wanted to remember my reactions throughout such an enormous read, but also to monitor my mental state during a pandemic. Much of my journal entries relate to bad dreams, reactions to the news, or just keeping up with the death count. Many times Stephen King's world was a close parallel to the real world, resulting in much anxiety and much admiration for a writer capable of prophecy.

Here's the full, unabridged copy of my *The Stand* review journal:

**01/27/2020** - What better time to see what *The Stand* is all about than during a global coronavirus pandemic? Given this book's epic length, I'm going to do a review journal with spoiler-free reactions over the many months I suspect it will take me to finish.

Three chapters in, and of course I'm hooked. Would expect nothing less from King. It may be a big ass book, but he doesn't wait around to get started. For this rollercoaster, you skip the line and sit right up front. Clickity-clank, clickity-clank, then a straight drop. If the rest of the ride is this intense, and the coronavirus doesn't kill me first, I'm going to be one frazzled mess by the end.

**02/11/2020** - I've been reading this a while, but only at 10%. My main thought right now is that it's entirely unfair for Stephen King, probably writing most of this while still in his 20s, to be this good. Old characters, female characters, rich, poor--they all come across so real it's startling. How can one mind comprehend so much? How does he articulate it so well? He builds this terrifying world one person at a time and it's so much scarier that way. I'm in awe.

In other news, over 1,000 deaths have been attributed to the coronavirus. That's approximately 2-3% death rate for those infected. Better than the 99% death rate in *The Stand*, so there's a bright side. Of course, there are Internet rumors circulating that China is under-reporting and the real count is significantly higher.

**02/28/2020** - Up to 15%. Starting to question my logic that reading this during a pandemic will make it more fun. I became physically disturbed last night while reading in bed. Like, on the brink of a panic attack. It's all getting too real. The careful pacing particularly. Stephen King, prophet that he is, describes our current world too well. One case spreads to ten, to fifty, to a thousand. The government doing all it can to prevent blame, to avoid panic. Of course that's making it worse.

For historical reference, what's going on right now is that there are more coronavirus cases outside of ground zero China than in. Last I heard that includes 56 countries, with rates rising every day. Other than China, Iran, Italy, South Korea and Japan seem to have it the worst. The W.H.O. just raised its risk assessment from "high" to "very high," which is their most extreme rating outside of declaring an outright pandemic. Saying the world is under pandemic essentially succumbs to the realization that the virus is unstoppable and everyone on the planet will eventually be exposed.

The death rate for the coronavirus is somewhere between 2-3%. I calculate that 2% of the world population is 154 million.

There's also been a case where someone previously "cured" of the coronavirus caught it a second time.

At home, our president has censored the CDC from making any announcements about the virus without approval by the vice president. When asked why the stock market is tanking, he blamed the recent Democratic debate.

Still unclear which is scarier right now, Stephen King's novel or reality.

**03/03/2020** - have to share this frightening quote from the book before I forget:

*The President is scheduled to speak tonight at 6:00 PST and his press secretary, Hubert Ross, has branded reports that the President will speak from a set mocked up to look like the Oval Office but actually deep in the White House bunker "hysterical, vicious, and totally unfounded." Advanced copies of the President's speech indicate that he will "spank" the American people for overreacting, and compare the current panic to that which followed Orson Welles's "War of the Worlds" radio broadcast in the early 30s.*

**03/13/2020** - It's a misty Friday the 13th. I'm reading *The Stand* on my break, which happens to be at home now. The office is still open, but we've been instructed to work from home for the unforeseeable future. This doesn't come as a surprise since nearly all gatherings have been cancelled. Talk shows are without an audience, theme parks are closed, movie releases are all delayed. The upcoming presidential debate has been relocated to avoid cross-country travel. Entire countries are on lockdown.

It's all playing out eerily similar to Stephen King's doomsday scenario. The book, so far, has been a crystal ball for what happens next. Within hours of reading a passage where King's president delivers a cough-filled address stating that virus concerns are blown out of proportion and a vaccine will be delivered next week, Mr. Trump appears in the oval office and assures all Americans will have access to testing and free medical treatment. Surprise, surprise, both presidents lied.

What's still to be determined is just how deadly this virus is. On one hand you have 22 dead in a single Seattle nursing home, but on the other it's been suggested that hundreds of thousands of infected people are running around who don't even know it because they don't have symptoms or they aren't serious. It seems like either way I'm not personally at high risk, but I am worried about those who are.

These are certainly interesting times, to say the least.

**03/19/2020** - Today marks my first full week of not leaving the house. There's little incentive to at this point. Movie theaters, restaurants, and book stores are all closed. And even if they weren't, the risk of getting COVID-19 isn't worth the reward. Fortunately we saw this coming and our house is stocked with food, water and other essentials. I'm thinking we can last another two weeks before needing to venture out again.

Being honest, I've struggled to pick up *The Stand* as of late. King usually delivers a delicious dose of escapism disaster, but under the circumstances it's all hitting too close to home. Like reading *Cujo* while

living with a rabid dog.

I also think the last few chapters have been really boring, though. I'm at 26%, which probably translates to page 350ish, and the most recent characters have really snoozed the action. I know I still have a bazillion pages to go so I'll hold off before giving final judgement, but in this present state I wouldn't call it his best work. Of course this wouldn't be the first time that a King book had a lengthy lull before launching back into life-changing thrills.

We'll see how I feel after another week. Hopefully I'll have better things to say about *The Stand*, and will not have yet descended into madness.

**03/28/2020** - *The Stand* did get good again. I'm at 35%. Been reading faster than normal because I have this conspiracy in my head that the coronavirus will finally end the day I finish reading this book. Unfortunately, even at my current pace, that might be several more months. I'm trying, world, I'm trying! Lol

As for current affairs, today is sadly noteworthy because over 2,000 people have officially died from COVID-19 in the United States. Just two days ago we hit 1,000 dead. The way things are going, it's very realistic for those numbers to continue doubling every few days.

The virus itself is still somewhat mysterious. Is it airborne? Kinda yes, kinda no. How long can it stay on surfaces? Several days...ish. Can you get it from touching cardboard boxes? Maybe? Will warmer weather do any good? Don't count on it. Who can you trust? No one, of course, because even the seemingly-healthy can spread it all around.

The president expects everything to be fixed in a few weeks so churches can be packed on Easter Sunday. We'd all get a good laugh out of a comment like that, except the situation is too dire.

What else has been going on? So much I can't even keep track. The government somehow came up with \$2,000,000,000,000+ to infuse the economy, save businesses and give people enough money to hopefully keep the lights on. Pretty cool, I guess, but I think we're all wondering what will happen next if this goes on for several more months.

A number of celebrities and politicians have caught the virus, some have died from it. A grim reminder that this really does impact everyone. You can't buy your way out of this mess.

**04/16/2020** - Future me, whenever you decide to re-read *The Stand* (which I'm sure you will at some point) remember that the end of "Book 1" gets boring. But don't give up, because the adventure really starts with "Book 2." There's a lot of direct homage to *The Wizard of Oz*, like there is in *The Dark Tower* series. Slightly cheesy, I suppose, but *Oz* is up there among the great quest novels so it's worthy. And like *Oz*, King populates his journey with unexpected characters who become close to your heart. You'll fear for them, and really hope they don't die—even though in the back of your mind you suspect they will.

Hopefully you won't live to see another global pandemic, but if you do—don't read *The Stand* during it. You will be tempted, because it is perhaps the definitive literary achievement of pandemic stories, but it won't make you feel better. It will make you feel worse.

If it's been 19 days since you last updated your review/blog, remember that looking back at what's happened in the world will be depressing. For example, 19 days ago only 1,000 Americans were documented as succumbing to the virus. Now that number is 34,000 and growing rapidly. Globally, there's been 144,341 deaths. These numbers include only those who were officially counted, of course. The world is unfair, and you know that there are many more who society didn't deem important enough to be included in the

statistics.

One good thing about revisiting *The Stand* will be recognizing that no matter how horrible your current political situations are, remember that most political situations are horrible. In the 1970s, King imagined a president who refused to take any responsibility for the handling of a pandemic. Had King's president lived long enough for the other branches of government to approve stimulus checks, there's no doubt he would have demanded that those checks bear his name. Situations change, but people generally don't.

If you are absolutely determined to re-read *The Stand* during another pandemic, remember that it's okay to take a break and read other books before coming back to it. I recommend gothic romances. They're a good melodramatic distraction from all the real drama swirling around.

**05/06/2020** - What's life like during a pandemic? I suppose people will ask years from now. For me, at least, the staying at home part isn't bad. Where there's books and Internet, I'm good. I'm still employed (from home) and taking online classes, so too busy to let staying in every night be oppressive.

That said, I still find myself suddenly panic-stricken. The smallest thing sends me a spiraling. Planning a birthday party and realizing it's impossible amid a swirl of uncertainty. Will I still have a job in six months? Will it be safe to travel? Will the next wave of virus be even worse? Will I be dead by then—what about my family?

Other things too. Watching a movie where people happily interact can be an escape, or a grim reminder that those moments were the before times—times we may never see again.

Are my panic attacks unwarranted? Probably. Mostly. But how can I be sure?

Even if we do eventually return to normal, what's the long-term psychological impact? Can I ever attend a concert or visit an amusement park without imagining a plague of death in the air?

The new developments haven't been reassuring. It's not just flu-like symptoms; the virus causes blood clots which can lead to fatal strokes. The strain that's out now is more severe than the original strain. Maybe you get it once and you have antibodies, maybe you can get it an unlimited number of times.

The official death toll continues to rise to terrifying numbers, but they're also saying the virus could have gone global as early as December 2019. How many COVID deaths haven't been counted? Hundreds? Thousands?

By the way, says some government leaders, we believe this virus was manufactured in a Chinese lab. Great. What does that mean? Was China reckless? Was this intentional and we have a nuclear war to look forward to?

Oh, and murder hornets.

Ugh!

Anyway, back to *The Stand*. I'll admit to still reading slowly. It's good. Really good. But I can only handle small doses at a time. King is revving up to create the ultimate Good vs. Evil battle. Stakes of Biblical proportions. I still got about 500 pages to read, but I can see why people find that aspect of it appealing. I'm not convinced it's Top 5 King material yet, but I'm willing to let the adventure roll on and be convinced otherwise.

**06/04/2020** - Dreams play an important role in The Stand. Survivors of the super flu dream both of holy Mother Abigail and evil Randall Flagg, but where their sympathies lie determines their allegiance.

Since the beginning of the pandemic I've had my own reoccurring nightmares. All of them some variation on the same theme: impending doom.

\*\*\*Goodreads Word Limit Reached, read the rest **HERE** .\*\*\*

**carol. says**

Dear Stephen,

I'm sorry. I just don't like you in that way. I know we've been friends for a long time, but I just never developed those kind of feelings for you, even after eleven hundred pages. I feel like we only moved forward in fits and stops, and we were just never able to sustain a kind of even-handed development of the kind of chills and thrills a person really likes. Shock someone enough times with snot running out of their nose, and it just becomes a little meaningless. And there are only so many ways to view a dead body before one gets kind of numb instead of apprehensive. Using the journal device to move things forward seems a little crude, when what we really need to do is talk.

I have to confess, I've felt kind of uncomfortable watching you struggle with religion and spirituality. You sparked my interest when you posited that this might be the battle between the age of reason and that of "irrationalism," and the dark man was the last vestige of doomed rationalism. I thought for a few minutes we were headed somewhere really special, but you didn't seem very confident, and the theme fell apart.

I will say there were a few surprises along the way, which I found pleasant. I appreciate you avoiding the obvious character arcs, especially when it comes to redemption. I was glad to meet most of your friends, especially Joe/Leo, Stu and even Kojak. Your military friends bored me out, though, especially Starkey; I don't even get why you like spending any time with those guys. Such a bunch of fossils. I do have to say, I was really impressed with how you must have studied disease modelling and progression--I almost felt like was there.

Sometimes I get the feeling that you don't really see me as a person, just a baby-maker. You even have an extended soliloquy about it, as if I wasn't even here reading your words. It bothers me, because you took the time to develop nuanced male relationships (Larry, Stu, Lloyd), but the women were about reproducing or were cannon fodder. Since you allowed technology to remain, I'm not going to buy into your lowest most-functional society mentality, no matter how many sociological theories you throw at me. And then there's the elderly black woman as representation of all that's spiritual. Perhaps even Mother Earth? If I'm rolling my eyes, it's because it's another aspect of compartmentalizing women as either maiden, matron or crone, and people of color as closer to God(s)(being savage and all, as you so helpfully illustrate in your "The Circle Closes" afterward). Honestly, it's kind of juvenile, and a little disappointing when I know you are capable of so much more.

It's time for me to move on. I'm sure you'll find someone special eventually, Stephen, because you are such a really great guy. And so unusual, too.

With Three Stars,

Your Friend Always.

## Kemper says

You know what's really scary? Getting sick while you're reading the first part of *The Stand*. Just try running a fever, going through a box of tissues and guzzling the better part of a bottle of NyQuil while Stephen King describes the grisly deaths of almost every one on Earth from a superflu. On top of feeling like crap, you'll be terrified. Bonus!

After a bio-engineered virus that acts like a revved up cold escapes from a U.S. government lab, it takes only weeks for almost all of humanity to succumb to the disease. A handful of survivors are mysteriously immune and begin having strange dreams, some of which are about a very old woman called Mother Abigail asking them to come see her. More disturbing are nightmares about a mysterious figure named Randall Flagg also known as the Dark Man or the Walkin' Dude.

As they make their way through an America almost entirely devoid of people, the survivors begin to unite and realize that the flu was just the beginning of their problems. While some are drawn to the saintly Mother Abigail in Boulder Colorado who tells them that they have been chosen by God, others have flocked to Flagg in Las Vegas who is determined to annihilate all those who refuse to pledge their allegiance to him.

If King would have just written a book about a world destroyed by plague and a small number of people struggling in the aftermath, it probably would have been a compelling story. What sets this one apart is the supernatural element. Flagg is the embodiment of evil and chaos. He's a mysterious figure who has been giving the wrong people the push needed for them to make things worse for everyone, and he sees the plague as his chance to fulfill his own destiny as a wrecker of humanity.

And on the other side, we have God. Yep, that God. The Big Cheese himself. But this isn't some kindly figure in a white robe with a white beard or George Burns or Morgan Freeman. This is the Old Testament God who demands obedience and worship while usually rewarding his most faithful servants with gruesome deaths.

King calls this a tale of dark Christianity in his forward, and one of the things I love about this book is that it does feel like a Biblical story, complete with contradictions and a moves-in-mysterious-ways factor. Stories don't get much more epic than this, and King does a great job of depicting the meltdown of the world through the stories of a variety of relateable characters. (Larry Underwood remains among my favorite King creations.)

One of my few complaints is that this features a lot of King's anti-technology themes that he'd use in several books like *Cell* or *The Dark Tower* series. We're told repeatedly that the 'old ways' like trying to get the power back on in Boulder are a 'death trip'. The good guys gather in the Rocky Mountains, but if they try to get the juice going so they won't freeze to death in the winter, they're somehow acting in defiance of God's will and returning to the bad habits? Not all tech is bad tech, Mr. King. Nature is a bitch and will kill your ass quicker than the superflu.

Here's another thing I'm not wild about. When this was published in the late '70s, the bean counters at King's publishers had decided that the book as written would be too pricey in hardback and no one would pay a whopping \$13 for a Stephen King hardback. So King cut about three hundred pages.

Around 1990 after it had become apparent that King could publish his shopping list as a best seller, he put



those pages back in and released the uncut version. Which I'm fine with. The original stuff was cut for a financial reason, not an editorial one, and there's some very nice bits of story added in. If King would have stopped there, we would have had a great definitive final version as originally created by the author.

Unfortunately, he seemed to catch a case of Lucasitis and decided to update the story a bit and change its original time frame from 1980 to 1990. I'm not sure why that seemed necessary to him. Yes, the book was a bit dated by then, but it was of its time. He didn't rewrite the text (Which I'm grateful for.), but just stuck in some references to Madonna and Ronald Reagan and Spuds McKenzie.

This led to a whole bunch of anachronisms. Would students in 1990 call soldiers 'war pigs'? Someone in New York picks up a phone book to look up the number to call an ambulance instead of dialing 911? A song called Baby, Can You Dig Your Man is a huge hit? None of it quite fits together. There's also a layer of male chauvinism and lack of diversity that you can overlook in a book written in the late '70s, but seems out of place for a book set and updated for 1990.

The things that irritate me are still far outweighed by one of my favorite stories of an apocalyptic battle between good and evil.

I'm also glad to get a long overdue audio edition of this book. Great narration and 40+ hours of end of the world horror make for a damn fine listening experience.

## **From Reader Review The Stand for online ebook**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Jacqueline McArdle:**

Reading a guide tends to be new life style in this particular era globalization. With reading you can get a lot of information that may give you benefit in your life. Together with book everyone in this world could share their idea. Books can also inspire a lot of people. Lots of author can inspire their reader with their story as well as their experience. Not only the storyplot that share in the textbooks. But also they write about the data about something that you need instance. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your children, there are many kinds of book that exist now. The authors these days always try to improve their skill in writing, they also doing some study before they write for their book. One of them is this The Stand.

#### **Jessica Rodriguez:**

People live in this new time of lifestyle always try and and must have the time or they will get lots of stress from both day to day life and work. So , when we ask do people have extra time, we will say absolutely indeed. People is human not really a huge robot. Then we request again, what kind of activity do you have when the spare time coming to you actually of course your answer will unlimited right. Then ever try this one, reading ebooks. It can be your alternative within spending your spare time, the actual book you have read is actually The Stand.

#### **Allen Barnett:**

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because by you looking at this one book you have issue that they don't and make you more like an interesting person. This kind of book can be one of one step for you to get success. This reserve offer you information that possibly your friend doesn't realize, by knowing more than different make you to be great individuals. So , why hesitate? Let's have The Stand.

### **Marian Dyer:**

That e-book can make you to feel relax. This book The Stand was colourful and of course has pictures on there. As we know that book The Stand has many kinds or type. Start from kids until adolescents. For example Naruto or Investigation company Conan you can read and believe you are the character on there. Therefore , not at all of book tend to be make you bored, any it offers you feel happy, fun and unwind. Try to choose the best book for yourself and try to like reading that will.

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